



87th Air Force Day

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The Defence Minister of India formally received the **first Rafale fighter jet (RB-001)** built for the Indian Air Force (IAF) in France on 8th October, 2019, **coinciding with 87th Air Force Day.**

- In **September 2016**, India and France signed a €7.87 billion **Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)** for 36 Rafale multi-role fighter jets in fly-away condition.
- As per IGA, deliveries have to begin 36 months from signing of contract and will be completed in 67 months.
- It is expected that India will receive all aircraft by April-May 2022.
- The **RB** in the aircraft designation stands for **IAF Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria** who as then Deputy Chief of IAF led the Indian negotiation team and had a **major role in the contract negotiations.**
- **About Rafale:**
 - It is a **twin-jet fighter aircraft** able to operate from both an aircraft carrier and a shore base.
 - It is a fully versatile aircraft which can carry out all combat aviation missions to achieve air superiority and air defence, close air support, in-depth strikes, reconnaissance, anti-ship strikes and nuclear deterrence.
- **India's Preparation:**
 - The IAF has already completed preparations, including required infrastructure and training of pilots.
 - The aircraft will be deployed at **Ambala air force station**, considered one of the most strategically located bases of the IAF. The Indo-Pak border is around 220 km from there.
 - The **second squadron** of Rafale will be stationed at **Hasimara base in West Bengal.**

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- The Indian Air Force was officially **established on 8th October 1932.**

- With around 1, 70,000 personnel and 1,500 aircraft, IAF is the **fourth largest air force** in the world after the US, Russia and China.
- **Every year**, the Air Force Day is **celebrated at Hindon base** in the presence of the IAF chief and senior officials of the three armed forces.

IAF's Hindon Air Force Station, situated near Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh) is the **largest in Asia** and **8th largest in the world**.

- This year the event saw IAF's newest acquisitions—US-made **Chinook heavy-lift helicopters** and **Apache attack helicopters**—in the customary flypast.

The Air Chief Marshal also made a reference to the **Balakot Strikes**.

Source: TH